

(From London Truth.)

Dick Downer was inclined to make a fool of himself about his pretty cousin, Mrs. Mayblossom. Notwithstanding that she had heartlessly jilted him, his devotion to her seemed rather to increase than to diminish. He could not, of course, ignore the fact that she had treated him most scandalously; but his mild resentment faded away to a vanishing point when it became apparent that his cousin's marriage was likely to prove an unhappy one. Capt. Mayblossom seemed a good fellow enough in his way; but however good a fellow a man may be, if he is absolutely devoid of income and expectations, he is not a desirable helpmate. No doubt, when she eloped with him, Ada Mayblossom had counted upon being able to win back the indulgent affection of her adopted parent, and thus to escape the poverty which she had been over the old man, she soon found that he was vindictively implacable. Not only was this so, but old Job Downer was so much of a snob that he could not resist his want of spirit and proper pride in defending his cousin after her treatment of him. Old Downer was never tired of denouncing the conduct of his daughter, and could not sit by and listen to without indignant remonstrance, whereby he not only irritated his father, but innocently helped to cause the rupture of the possibility of effecting a reconciliation between the two.

In spite of his father's protestation Dick was a frequent visitor at the trim little house in Grosvenor Street, where his cousin's poor paper husband resided. Being a simple-minded individual, he might have gone there fifty times without ever suspecting that the result of his visits would be to grieve his father. The house was daintily and even expensively furnished; the living was excellent, for the Captain was particular about his food and his drink, and he was a very good and consistent judge of all that in London; while the domestic affairs generally were well ordered and showed no signs of painful parsimony. Dick, however, was soon initiated by his cousin into the secret of the Captain's extravagance, and sympathetically shared with her the diurnal apprehensions which it involved.

To most people—who, by the way, had a poor opinion of the Captain's wife—the income—little Mrs. Mayblossom seemed entirely impervious to the worry of pecuniary embarrassments. She was always well dressed, and her face and figure were so good-looking that Dick, in their confidential tête-à-tête, she confessed that her affected indifference was only a disguise to conceal from the world the anguish which tortures her mind. It was a great deal more than she could do, she said, to make Dick acutely sensible of the misery of a

Pretty Mrs. Mayblossom had smiled, and Dick had seen her smile, but he knew that she deliberately worked upon her cousin's feelings for the sake of getting money out of him. It would have been nearer the truth to say that she had been nearer the truth when she told him that Mayblossom's motive was to touch indirectly through Dick, the adamant heart of her wealthy uncle. At the same time, she was not far from the truth when she told Dick and took it with a very faint show of scruple.

Dick would willingly have parted with the money, but he failed to potest in the world of the present moment's uneasiness; but, unfortunately, the assistance he could render was of a merely temporary nature. Though not a pauper, a pauper in the eyes of the world, his income was that of a poorly paid clerk, and the old man, knowing his son's simple habits, and no doubt suspecting the destination of his pocket-money, turned upon him the questions of a miser.

For his own part, old Downer refused emphatically to contribute a single farthing to the support of his errand boy, and he was not long in coming to an unforfeiting a spirit that after a time Dick abandoned as absolutely hopeless the ungrateful task of appealing to him.

Downer, naturally, things went from bad to worse in the Mayblossom ménage. Creditors became clamorous, the friends grew lukewarm and chary, and the proud girl, who had been so generous in her youth, became so generous but humiliating subterfuges and manoeuvres. To complicate matters there appeared on the lowering horizon of the future the spectre of a thunderbolt, which, when it burst, would, as Dick feared, completely submerge his poor cousin in her sea of troubles.

It took Dick notice of late that Capt. Mayblossom was very seldom at home. He gathered incidentally that the Captain disappeared from time to time rather mysteriously, and he was not long in guessing that the girl had voted wife. She, poor woman, made no complaint on the subject, but the downcast look the half-suppressed sigh, the ill-concealed tears, the morbidly thoughtful air, which, when her husband's absences told the old, sad story of neglect and faithlessness plainer than words could speak.

One day he started, therefore, than he otherwise might have been at receiving from his cousin one day a few blotted, incoherent lines, urging him to come to her at once, as she was in a great hurry. He was not long in guessing that the moment's delay he hastened to her side and learned that what he had foreseen had happened and that his cousin's husband had deserted her.

He was not long in guessing that she was in vain for words in which to convey, however feebly, his heartfelt sympathy and devotion. He was not long in guessing that she was in vain for the peculiar villainy of the man who had thus wronged her. Poor little girl!

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the object of his cousin's request, and there ensued a scene which, but for Dick's quick escape, might have ended in complete estrangement. But on the following morning, to his son's surprise, old Downer showed signs of relenting, and at length he said, reluctantly:

"You and I mustn't quarrel any more about that woman, Dick. She isn't worth it. I've written to Gregg, my lawyer, and told him to ship her off to Australia at his expense."

"My dear father!" cried Dick, immensely relieved and gratified.

"I'm glad," said the grateful, Dick, for I'm doing it entirely upon your account, and not out of sympathy for her," growled the old man. "She deserves her fate for her heartlessness. You don't seem to care for her husband, would he be more dangerous than ever over here, and I would much sooner she were on the other side of the globe."

Dick hastened off to inform his cousin of the success of his mission; and, though little Mrs. Mayblossom evidently did not relish the interference of a lawyer in her business, she nevertheless, though with a very bad grace, and cordially for the service he had rendered, Dick would fain have taken an active part in assisting his cousin to make the necessary arrangements for her removal, and to his great chagrin, Mrs. Mayblossom said with firmness:

"No, Dick; it must not be. In the miserable case of a deserted wife I cannot take too deep ground in my conduct. Besides, as you dear, good uncle is going to pay all this money for me, I must not offend him by occupying his son's time."

"But, Ada! Will you not think of me a little?" cried Dick, quite plaintively.

"I am thinking of your good, Dick," said Mayblossom, musingly, "but I don't wish you want to speak. You must try and forget me, Dick."

"Forget you, Ada! I never can, never. My heart will go with you over the sea," cried poor Dick.

"No, Dick; it will not," said the little lady, fixing her blue eyes upon him for an instant with a strange look of determination. "Then she who has been so kind to come and see me off, Dick. I want you to come. But until then it must be *au revoir*."

She made him a little courtesy, and then, with her hand seized his hand and kissed it. Before poor Dick could realize what he was about, he had fallen on his knees at her feet, giving passionate utterance to his many thanks. His head bowed considerably startled for a moment, and then, releasing herself gently but with firmness from his grasp, quietly insisted upon his promise to see her again on the day of her departure. Dick, feeling considerably abashed by Mrs. Mayblossom's dignified demeanor, gave the required undertaking, guiltily aware that the epistle from his father, from questioning the decree of banishment.

Dick kept his word, as in honor bound, but the fact of having avowed to his cousin the

passion which consumed him caused him to formulate hopes which, up to that time, he had not seriously conceived. Now that Ada Mayblossom's husband had deserted her, might he not legitimately aspire to possess her? On the other side of the globe, in a new country, might he not be disposed to requite her life-long devotion? He would follow her to Australia, to the uttermost ends of the earth, on receiving a word, a look, a sign, which might indicate that she would wild thoughts and ideas naturally caused Dick to anticipate with feverish impatience and anxiety their next meeting, with which the thought could not associate in his mind the sad word "Farwell."

When the momentous day arrived Dick said his cousin awaiting him at the head of the gangway, and he did not shrink. He heard. She was as pale as himself, but infinitely less agitated, and, after a few words of greeting, she conducted him to her cabin, where she could not be disturbed.

"I have a confession to make to you, Dick," she said, facing him with composure. "I have already made mine, Ada," began Dick, looking at her with surprise.

"I will listen to what I have to say first, Dick," said his cousin, before he could proceed.

"You believe that I am about to proceed to Australia—alone?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Mayblossom half involuntarily, perhaps, laid her hand lightly upon a pile of luggage which enumerated the bunk beside which she was standing, and Dick recognized, with a start, a man's hat-box and a gun-case.

"Is this your cabin?" he inquired, turning pale.

"Yes, it is mine," she answered.

"And those things?" he interrogated, quite sternly, with a glance at the compromising items.

"I thought I was not going alone, Dick," said his cousin, blushing somewhat; "these things belong to my husband."

"To Mayblossom!" cried Dick. "Is he going with you?"

"Yes. He is in the saloon outside. Do wish to see him?" inquired his cousin, a little sharply.

"Are you, then, reconciled? Have you forgiven him?" said poor Dick.

"There was nothing to forgive," returned his cousin, lifting her handsome head, and looking at Dick a little sadly. "He was a false friend, a false friend of husbands, and on never liked him, and were ready to leave the worst."

"But—the letter which you showed me," cried Dick, reddening.

"He wrote it by my dictation. It was my own composition," said Mrs. Mayblossom, in a hard voice.

"Then, your—your grief, your distress, your agitation?"—murmured Dick.

"Were all assumed," said Mrs. Mayblossom, mercilessly. "My husband heard every word through the folding door."

"It was a trick, then—a plot!" exclaimed poor Dick, bitterly wounded.

"Yes, Dick, it was. I was desperate, and

the only means I could devise of raising the necessary money to enable us to emigrate to Australia was by pretending to be in a position which excited your keenest sympathy. Thanks to you—for I am still grateful Dick—the money was forthcoming," said his cousin, unrepentant.

"I scorn your gratitude, Ada," cried poor Dick with sudden fury. "Is this your return for all my devotion?" he heaved in a trembling voice, and then, as he did not know what to do, and now you are not ashamed to confess that you have made me a contemptible dupe."

"I wanted to convince you, Dick, that I am not a hypocrite, and I did not know how," said his cousin, speaking in measured accents, but as pale as a ghost. "In justice to my husband and to myself, and for the sake of your own future happiness, I have made this confession to you."

"You might have spared me, Ada," was all Dick could say, as he opened the cabin door with a trembling hand.

"I had no choice," said Dick, for it has been an unpleasant task. But I had others to consider besides myself, and, after all, I have been paid for what I have done."

"Paid for it by a miserable trick."

"Yes, and well paid. See here!" And, with a little hysterical laugh, Mrs. Mayblossom drew a slip of paper from the bosom of her dress and held it up to Dick's eyes. It was a check, signed by his father, for £500.

The same evening Dick Downer sought an interview with his father in his study, and said to him, in a low voice:

"Father, are you aware that Mayblossom never deserted his wife at all, and that the whole affair was a miserable conspiracy to get me out of the way?"

"You don't say so!" cried the old man, opening his eyes in genuine astonishment.

"That appears to be the case," replied Dick, "and I have been deceived by his evident *bona fides*, "but what about that check for £500 which bore your signature?"

"She haggle a good deal, Dick, with my lawyer for the money she required, and that I was not willing to give her, and, finally, to get as much as she wanted, she came to me and offered for £500, to—convince you of the folly of your infatuation."

"She has done so, father, very effectually," said Dick.

"Then I don't grudge the money," returned the old man, as his shrewd eyes twinkled.

LOOK-TOMORROW EVENING FOR
CHRISTMAS EVE IN A PALACE CAR.

A NEW STORY.

ALBION W. TOURJEE.

Dick Downer was inclined to make a fool of himself about his pretty cousin, Mrs. Mayblossom. Notwithstanding that she had heartlessly jilted him, his devotion to her seemed rather to increase than to diminish. He could not, of course, ignore the fact that she had treated him most scandalously, and that she had, in all probability, faded away to a wretched point when it became apparent that his cousin's marriage was likely to prove an unhappy one. Capt. Mayblossom seemed a good fellow enough in his way; but however good a fellow a man may be, if he is absolutely devoid of income and expectations, he is not a desirable helpmate. No doubt, when she eloped with him, Ada Mayblossom had counted upon being able to win back the indulgent affection of her adopted parent, Dick's father; but, great to her surprise, when she met him, she soon found that he was vindictively implacable. Not only was this so, but old Job Downer was furious with his niece for having so wantonly deceived him, and he considered her a disgrace to his spirit and proper for punishing his cousin after her treatment of him. Old Downer was never tired of denouncing his niece in terms which poor Dick, who was a sensitive soul, could not endure. He never remonstrated, whereby he not only irritated his father, but innocently helped to dissipate the remotest chance of effecting a reconciliation.

In spite of his father's protestation Dick was a frequent visitor at the trim little suburban villa, in which his father, cousin and mother-in-law resided. He was a handsome, well-mannered individual, he might have gone there fifty times without ever suspecting that Capt. Care was perched astride the gable.

The house was a charming one, and well-furnished; the living was excellent; for the Captain was particular about his food and had the reputation of being one of the best cooks in the city. The Captain's tastes in domestic affairs generally were well ordered and showed no signs of painful parsimony. Dick, however, was soon initiated by his cousin into the secret of the Captain's private life, and sympathetically shared with her the dismal apprehensions which it involved.

To little Mrs. who, by the way, had a pretty good income, the Captain's income—little Mrs. Mayblossom seemed entirely impervious to the worry of pecuniary embarrassments. She was always well dressed, and her manner and conversation were perfect. Dick, in their confidential tête-à-têtes, she confessed that her affected indifference was only a disguise to conceal from the world the anguish which tormented her, and she would make Dick utterly sensible of the misery of her

cousin's feelings for the sake of gettingtin' more money out of him, it would have been better to have known the truth, perhaps, had they suggested it to Mrs. Maybloss. I don't know, but I think it is undeniable through Dick, the adamant integrity of his heart of her wealthy uncle. At the same time it must be owned that she did get money out of Dick, as took it with a very faint air of shyness or reluctance.

Dick would willingly have parted with the last farthing he possessed in the world to have been able to do this. But, unfortunately, the assistance he could render was of a merely temporary nature. Though nominally a partner in his father's business, he was in reality a clerk, and the old man, knowing his son's simple habits, and no doubt suspecting the destination of his pocket-money, turned up his nose at the offer. On his own part, old Docker refused emphatically to contribute a single farthing to the support of his erring niece and her husband, and he was not a man to be moved after a time Dick abandoned as absolutely hopeless the ungrateful task of appealing to him.

Her father, naturally, things went from bad to worse in the Mayblosson ménage. Creditors became clamorous, friends grew lukewarm and chary, and the procurring their commences with the most unbecoming and humiliating subterfuges and manoeuvres. To complicate matters there appeared on the lowering horizon of the future an ominous and threatening mist, which, if it came, would, as Dick feared, completely submerge his poor cousin in her sea of troubles.

Dick had noticed of late that Capt. Maybloss was very seldom at home. He gathered incidentally that the Captain disappeared from time to time rather mysteriously, and that his mansion throughout the year, when he was in it, she, poor woman, made no complaint on the subject, but the down-cast look and the half-suppressed sigh, the ill-concealed uneasiness when he came in, and the nervousness when he went out, told the old, sad story of neglect and faithlessness plainer than words could speak.

Dick was less startled, therefore, than his cousin might have been at receiving from his cousin one day a few blotted, incoherent lines, urging him to come to her at once, as a terrible grief had befallen her. He was alarmed that what he had foreseen had happened, and that his cousin's husband had deserted her.

He went in vain to his father, and in vain for words in which to convey, however feebly, his heartfelt sympathy and devotion, and in vain for the aid of his mother, who was thus the peculiar villain of the matter, and who had thus become a poor

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rather sulky :—

"And I mustn't quarrel any more about that woman, Dick. She isn't worth it. I'll let her go. I'll let her go. I'll let him to ship her off to Australia at my expense."

"My dear father!" cried Dick, immensely relieved and gratified.

"You ought to feel grateful, Dick, for I'm doing it entirely upon your account, and not out of sympathy for her," growled the old man, who had been so long in the habit of less conduct to you and me. Deserted by her husband, she would be more dangerous than ever over here, and I would much rather she were on the other side of the globe."

Dick hastened off to inform his cousin of the success of his mission; and, though little more than a child, he was conscious of the interference of a lawyer in the business, she, nevertheless, thanked Dick very warmly and cordially for the service he had rendered her, and would do him the honor to take part in assisting his cousin to make the necessary arrangements for her departure, but, to his great chagrin, Mrs. Mayblossom said with a sigh :—

"No, Dick; it must not be. In the miserable position of a deserted wife I cannot be too circumspect in my conduct. Besides, as you are going to take up to pay all this money for me, I must not offend him by occupying his son's time."

"But, Ada! Will you not think of me a little?" cried Dick, plaintively.

"I am thinking of your good, Dick," said Mrs. Mayblossom, more seriously than she was wont to speak. "You must try and forget me."

"Forget you, Ada! I never can, never. My heart will go with you over the sea," cried poor Dick.

"Forget it; it will not," said the little lady, fixing her blue eyes upon him for an instant with a strange look of determination. Then she added lightly : "You shall come and see me when you want to go, and until then it must be as I revolve."

She made him a little courtesy, and then, with a sudden impulse, seized his hand and kissed it. Before Dick could realize what he was about, he had fallen on his knees at her feet, giving passionate utterance to his thanksgiving and adoration. His cousin looked considerably startled for a moment, and then, releasing herself gently but with firmness from his grasp, quietly insisted upon his promise to see her again before her departure. Dick, feeling considerably abashed by Mrs. Mayblossom's dignified demeanor, gave the required undertaking, quitted her room through the episode of the conversation, from questioning the decree of banishment.

Dick kept his word, as in honor bound, but the fact of having avowed to his cousin the

new country, might she not be disposed to requite his life-long devotion? He would follow her to Australia, to the uttermost ends of the earth, resolving a work of long and the slightest sign of encouragement! These wild thoughts and ideas naturally caused Dick to anticipate with feverish impatience the next meeting, with which he doggedly declined to associate in his mind the sad word "Farewell."

When the momentous day arrived Dick found himself already at the head of the gangway on board the good ship *Balaarat*. She was as pale as himself, but infinitely less agitated, and, after a few words of greeting, they parted, each to his cabin, where they could converse undisturbed.

"I have a confession to make to you, Dick," said Dick, facing him with composure.

"I have already said mine, Ada," began Dick, unsteadily.

"Listen to what I have to say first, Dick," said his cousin before he could proceed.

"I have already said mine, Ada," began Dick, unsteadily.

"As she spoke, Mrs. Mayblossom, half involuntarily, perhaps, laid her hand lightly upon his arm, the language which encumbered the bunk beside which she was standing, and Dick recognized, with a start, a man's hat box and a gun-case."

"Is your cabin?" he inquired, turning pale.

"Yes, it is mine," she answered.

"And those things?" he interrogated, quite calm, with a glance at the compromising items.

"I told you I was not going alone, Dick," said his cousin, blushing somewhat; these things belong to my husband."

"To Mayblossom?" cried Dick. "Is he going with you?"

"Yes," he said the saloon outside. Do visit to see him?" inquired his cousin, a little sharply.

"Are you, then, reconciled? Have you forgiven him?" asked poor Dick.

"There is nothing to forgive," returned his cousin, lifting her handsome head, and looking at Dick a little scornfully. "He was ever true to me and to his husband, and I liked him and were ready to believe the worst."

"But—but the letter which you showed me," cried Dick, suddenly.

He wrote it by my dictation. It was my own composition," said Mrs. Mayblossom, in a hard voice.

"Then your—your grief, your distress, your agitation?"—murmured Dick.

"Were all assumed," said Mrs. Mayblossom, mercilessly. "My husband heard of my falling in love with another man."

"It was a trick, then—a plot!" exclaimed poor Dick, bitterly wounded.

"Yes, Dick, it was. I was desperate, and

unfinchingly."

"I scorn your gratitude, Ada," cried poor Dick with sudden fury. "Is this your return for my having tried to convince you, Dick, that I should have died for you, Ada, and now you are not ashamed to confess that you have made me a contemptible dupe?"

"I am not ashamed to confess that I am heartless and cruel—even I do not love," said his cousin, speaking in measured accents, but as pale as a ghost. "In justice to my husband, to myself, and for the sake of your own future happiness, I have made this confession to you."

"You might have spared me, Ada," was all Dick could say, as he opened the cabin door with a trembling hand.

"I should have liked to, Dick, for it has been an unpleasant task. But I had others to consider besides myself, and after all, I have been paid for what I have done."

"Paid for it?" gasped Dick.

"Yes, and well paid. See here!" And, with a little rustled lace, Mrs. Mayblossom drew a pile of paper from the bosom of her dress and held it before Dick's eyes. It was a check, signed by his father, for £500.

The same evening Dick Downer sought an interview with his father in his study, and said, almost fiercely :—

"Father, are you aware that Mayblossom never told me all at all, and that the whole affair was a miserable conspiracy to rob me?"

"You don't say so!" cried the old man, opening his eyes in genuine astonishment.

"That appears to be the case," replied Dick, rather taken aback by his father's evident bona fides, but what about that check for £500? he thought, and he was right.

"She haggle a good deal, Dick, with my lawyer about the money she required," said the old man, looking at his son curiously; "but she has got her own signature, and she came to me and offered for £500, to—to convince you of the folly of your infatuation."

"She has done so, father, very effectually," said Dick.

"Then I don't grudge the money," returned the old man, as his shrewd eyes twinkled.

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